



**A few words
from State
Superintendent
of Schools
Lillian M.
Lowery**

Maryland educators did a wonderful job in completing the TELL Maryland Survey, and for that we thank you. In a matter of weeks, we should have data from this year's survey.

More than 50,000 educators from across the State completed the 2013 survey, surpassing the record of 46,000 respondents set with the 2011 survey. Several systems – Garrett, Washington, Charles, and Talbot – had response rates at 95 percent or above.

Information from the confidential survey will help inform the work we all do.

Yet another marvelous teacher joined the State Board for a visit this week. This time the Board heard from Lauren Duell Hunter, the Grade 5 Reading Specialist at William Paca/Old Post Road Elementary School in Harford County, who earlier this school year was named Maryland's recipient of the Milken National Educator Award. One of the most prestigious awards in K-12 education, it brings with it a \$25,000 check.



Lauren Hunter meets with the State Board.

Ms. Hunter is not only an exemplary teacher, but also

KINDERGARTEN READINESS REMAINS STRONG

Children entering kindergarten in Maryland public schools are coming to class with much stronger academic, physical and social skills than they did a decade ago, according to a new report by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).



Assistant State Superintendent Rolf Grafwallner digs into the school readiness data.

“Children Entering School Ready to Learn—School Readiness Information for School Year 2012-13,” a report by MSDE’s Division of Early Childhood Development released this week before the Maryland State Board of

Education, found dramatic progress since the baseline year of 2001-2002 across all demographic subgroups. For the first time, however, the percentage of Maryland students entering kindergarten fully prepared for learning in the fall did not increase over the previous year.

Although the number of students rated as “fully ready” increased 1,400 students over 2011-12, the percentage of incoming kindergartners who were rated by their teachers as “fully ready” was 82 percent, down slightly from 83 percent due to an increase in enrollment. Since 2001-2002, the percentage has risen 33 points.

“Maryland’s youngest learners have made great progress over the past decade, but more work needs to be done,” said State Superintendent of Schools Lillian M. Lowery. “By making certain that more children are enrolled in high-quality early learning experiences, we can further improve the numbers of well-prepared kindergartners.”

The annual MSDE study reflects assessment information on kindergartners’ readiness levels in

serves as a role model for the students in her Title I school. Growing up in a single-parent household in circumstances similar to the children she serves, she has developed a connection with the students and helped them succeed.

Gail Dunlap, principal at William Paca/Old Post Road Elementary, may have said it best. "She is child-centered," she said of Ms. Hunter's methods. "She is kid-first."

Congratulations to Lauren Duell Hunter.
Congratulations also to her students!

* * *

The Maryland Commission for Women this month inducted six new members into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame, and two have connections to the Maryland State Department of Education:

Dr. Charlene Mickens Dukes is the first female president of Prince George's Community College, and has been a statewide leader in education. She also serves as President of the Maryland State Board of Education.

Linda A. Shevitz is an expert in the areas of gender equity, women's history, multicultural education, and social justice. We are also fortunate to have her serve as director of the MSDE Office of Equity Assurance and Compliance.

For more on the new inductees, see the attached [press release](#).

Please join me in congratulating these two remarkable women!

* * *

As the Maryland General Assembly session nears its conclusion, it is apparent to me that our legislators continue to put education at the top of our State's priority list. Their steadfast support of our schools is gratifying.

While other states consider making big cuts to education, our legislators realize the importance our top-ranked school system has to the economic future of our State. Our classrooms have received bipartisan support throughout the session.

Maryland schools, students, and communities benefit from the work taking place in Annapolis, and we thank our Delegates and Senators for the work they do.

* * *

social and personal areas, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, the arts, physical development, and health. Trained kindergarten teachers review work samples and observations in making their determination of readiness.

Kindergarten readiness has improved significantly since all early childhood programs were brought under the MSDE banner in 2005. Since the Division of Early Childhood Development was established eight years ago, the number of accredited child care programs has grown significantly and MSDE has established several quality initiatives to improve the early learning opportunities for all children.

Also important has been the reduction in the achievement gap between students of different ethnicities. For example, African American children have made dramatic strides since the initial report, with the percentage of "fully ready" students rising 42 percentage points overall and narrowing the gap with White and Asian peers. Improvement by Hispanic children also has been dramatic, with the percentage of fully ready students increasing 32 points.

MSDE has found that improved MMSR results also translate to better results in the Maryland School Assessment by the time students reach third grade. Children who enter kindergarten fully school-ready are far more likely to be proficient in both reading and math by Grade Three.

The MMSR study results continue to spotlight the critical importance of high-quality early learning opportunities. Children who come into kindergarten from structured early-care settings started school better prepared for learning than those who remained at home or in the homes of relatives, the research found. Children enrolled in public school pre-K programs (83 percent fully ready for kindergarten), child care centers (87 percent), and non-public nursery schools (93 percent) the year prior to kindergarten exhibited stronger school readiness levels than those who were at home or in informal care settings the year prior to kindergarten.

Maryland's annual school readiness report is the result of legislative action to gauge the progress on school readiness skills of incoming kindergartners. Each year, more than 2,000 kindergarten teachers use an age-appropriate portfolio-based assessment to evaluate their students' performance on 30

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Calendar

April 8 – General Assembly Session Ends

April 23 – Maryland State Board of Education Meeting, Baltimore

**VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS****Maryland Meals for Achievement**

February 27, 2013

The Governor and State Schools Superintendent Lillian Lowery celebrate the success of Maryland Meals for Achievement at Eastport Elementary in Annapolis; specifically, the move of breakfast from the cafeteria to the classroom!

News From The Board

February 26, 2013

Maryland ranks number one again in Advanced Placement – it's 7th year running – but digs in to try to get even better! It's getting near crunch time for the Teacher-Principal Evaluations – we'll have an update. For the 3rd time in 7 years, Maryland has a national finalist in the Teacher of the Year competition, you'll hear from Rhonda Blankenship of Cecil County – and more!

In the News

Man's Best Friend Helps Students Read
Howard County Times

U.S. Secretary of Education to Visit Baltimore County
Baltimore Sun

Kindergarten Readiness Still Strong
WBAL-TV

indicators of learning in their classrooms during the first eight weeks of school. The assessment information in the report reflects scores for each of the seven domains of learning, such as literacy, math, and social skills, as well as the composite score of all domains.

Maryland is among the nation's leaders in early childhood development. The State was among the first nine to receive a federal Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant, and is using the \$50 million to further strengthen its programs by improving governance, accountability, standards, and access.

The complete School Readiness report is available on the special MSDE website,
www.MdSchoolReadiness.org.

REACH OUT AND READ BOOSTS LITERACY

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) last week joined the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP) to promote the Reach Out and Read Program, which is currently recruiting Primary Care practices to help promote early literacy by making books a routine part of care.

In 2012, MDAAP received a four year, \$1.4 million grant from MSDE as part of the Federal Race to the Top funding to bring the evidence-based program Reach Out and Read to 75,000 low-income children by December 31, 2015. To accomplish this goal, the Chapter is establishing Reach Out and Read programs at practices/clinics in Maryland which currently do not have the program and which have a majority of patients who are low income.

Reach Out and Read is a nonprofit organization that promotes early literacy and school readiness nationwide by partnering with pediatricians, who give new books to children and advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud.

"Reading is a critical part of childhood and is important for a child's overall health," said Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Secretary of DHMH. "Reach Out and Read allows pediatricians to help their patients get the benefits of books from the beginning."

"Reach Out and Read promotes healthy minds much

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the same way as pediatric check-ups promote healthy bodies,” said State Superintendent of Schools Lillian M. Lowery. “This program offers a unique opportunity to provide Maryland’s youngest learners a running start on their education by instilling a love of books. We appreciate the support we’ve had from the Maryland Chapter of the MDAAP.”

So far, the grant has allowed the chapter to extend Reach Out and Read to nine practices in eight jurisdictions across the state. As a result, nearly 12,000 children are now receiving new books at their well visits. The Chapter is actively recruiting additional primary care practices to participate in the program.

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MSDE Videos: <http://www.MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/newsroom/videos>

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